



International
History Bowl



International History
OLYMPIAD

International History Bowl World Championships

Official Rules Summary

This document is intended as an outline of the rules of the competition. If you have specific questions regarding more detailed aspects of the rules, please reference the full National History Bowl Official Rules documents (accessible at www.iacompetitions.com/rules-scoresheets-question-distribution/) which apply here as well. Note that where instances of three-way play or team size are concerned, or where there are other discrepancies in the rules, the rules as outlined here take precedence over the online documents. This document does not cover how teams are formed; please refer to the International History Olympiad website for that information. In International History Bowl matches at the International History Olympiad, players will be playing as a team of two or three players at once against one or two other teams in a history-themed buzzer-based quiz match that consists of four quarters. If one or two players are absent, a team of one student can still compete. No players should sit out for any questions at any point. This document likewise does not cover the tournament structure (i.e. whether matches will be two-way or three-way in either the preliminary or playoff rounds, and how many teams will make the upper bracket and/or playoff rounds in a division. Please refer to official Olympiad communication and updates for information on those points.

1. Four Quarter Gameplay Rules

A. First Quarter

- a. **The first quarter consists of ten (eight in Intermediate and Elementary School Division games) relatively short tossup (i.e. questions where the buzzer is used) questions worth 10 points each for a correct answer.** The questions take the form of short paragraphs that progress from harder to easier information on any given topic in history.
- b. At no point during Bowl matches will points be deducted from a team for an incorrect response.
- c. Players must ring in with the buzzer before they can answer the question. Only the player who buzzed can give an answer, not their teammates.
- d. Talking among teammates during a question is not allowed, and if the moderator notices this, they will disqualify the talking team for that question.
- e. If one player rings in and answers incorrectly, neither that player nor anyone else on their team can ring in again on that question.
- f. After a player has rung in, they have three seconds to start giving their answer. A player can keep speaking without pausing after the 3 second point but they cannot start an answer after 3 seconds.
- g. At the end of the question, the moderator counts to three, then calls time if no one buzzes. If one team rings in after the question and gets it wrong, if the other team(s) is/are still alive (i.e. they haven't answered incorrectly), then they get three seconds to buzz in regardless of how much time the first team took to ring in. In three-way play, if the second team rings in incorrectly after the question is finished, then the third team still gets three seconds after the incorrect buzz of the second team to answer.

- h. If a team is incorrect while answering during the question, and the question has not been finished, the moderator does not go back to the start of the question, but picks up from where they had left off.
- i. Moderators do not prompt for an answer on buzzer questions at all, and to keep time, they simply count to themselves; they do not need a timer. All timing decisions throughout the match are at the discretion of the moderator and are not protestable.
- j. These rules on tossup questions and timing hold for all buzzer questions, including second quarter, fourth quarter, and tiebreaker questions (with the exception of how fourth quarter questions are scored, as noted below).

B. Second Quarter

- a. **The second quarter consists of eight tossup questions worth 10 points each for a correct answer in all age divisions. If a team answers one of these correctly, that team will be entitled to one bonus question, which is also worth 10 points.**
- b. If neither team gets the buzzer question, neither team hears the bonus.
- c. If the team to whom the bonus was directed answers incorrectly, the other team(s) cannot “steal” the bonus; the bonuses do not “bounceback.”
- d. On bonus questions, teammates are allowed to confer with each other.
- e. The buzzer is not used for bonus questions, though if a player buzzes before answering a bonus question, it is not grounds for ruling the team incorrect (the moderator should simply remind the team that they don’t need to ring in on bonus questions).
- f. On bonus questions, the moderator should prompt for the answer **five** seconds after having finished reading and then allow an extra **two** seconds for the team to start giving an answer.
- g. The moderator will take the first answer clearly directed at them (this is at the discretion of the moderator) from anyone on the team. The moderator may ask teams to clarify as to who is speaking for the team if two players answer simultaneously.
- h. A team can designate a captain or player to answer, but this is not necessary. If a team does this, then the moderator should duly take answers only from the designated player, even if another team member speaks first to direct an answer at the moderator.

C. Third Quarter

- a. **The third quarter consists of category rounds that are timed at 60 seconds per team and where the buzzer is not used.**
- b. At all International History Bowl matches at the International History Olympiad, the team in the lead selects their category first. In three-way play, then the team in second selects second, and the team in third place receives the final unchosen category. If teams were tied coming into the 3rd quarter, the team most recently in the lead (including for teams tied for second place in three-way play) selects before the other team(s) with which they are tied.
- c. Each category has a theme and 8 short questions (6 in Intermediate and Elementary School Division games) fitting the theme.
- d. The team that selects the category has 60 seconds to answer as many questions as possible.
- e. Usually, the category has a lead-in (e.g. “Concerning the Roman Empire, name the...” at the top of the page). The reader reads this, and then starts the clock before reading question 1. The buzzers are not used during this quarter, and team members may confer on all questions.
- f. Teams may pass questions, but then they cannot come back to them.
- g. As on bonus questions, the reader takes the first answer from anyone on the team clearly directing an answer at them. The reader can ask a team to clarify if needed. Teams may also designate one player to speak for the team, but they do not need to do this (if a team does this, then the moderator should duly take answers only from the designated player, even if another team member speaks first to direct an answer at the moderator).
- h. If time runs out, a student who is actively directing an answer at the reader may finish giving the answer,

but a player cannot start an answer after time runs out.

- i. Once the first team has finished answering all 8 or 6 questions, or once time expires, whichever happens first, then the second team has a chance to answer questions the first team missed or passed (these are then called bounceback questions). Bounceback questions are reread to the second team and then they are timed like second quarter Bonus questions (i.e. 5 seconds, then a prompt, then 2 seconds to start giving the team's answer).
- j. Note that in three-way play, if a bounceback is answered incorrectly by the second team, it is then given to the third team to answer. In this case, the question should not be reread to the third team; instead, the moderator should just say "bounceback" or "incorrect" and then the third team then has 5 seconds to confer, then the moderator should say "answer please" and allow 2 more seconds for someone on the third team to start giving an answer.
- k. In three-way matches, the 2nd place team entering the quarter receives the first chance at the bounceback questions of the team that was in 1st place, with the team that was in 3rd place getting second chance at any bouncebacks. When the 2nd place team selects their category, the team in 3rd place coming into the third quarter gets the first chance at their bouncebacks, then the team in 1st place gets the second chance at any bouncebacks. When the team in 3rd place gets the remaining category, the team in 1st place coming into the third quarter gets the first chance at any bounceback questions, and the team in 2nd place gets the second chance.
- l. If the first team does not get to a question at all; it is not read to the other team(s).
- m. If time expires midway through a question, the reader stops reading immediately. The other team(s) only hear(s) up to that exact point in the question where the reader stopped when they hear the question on the bounceback.
- n. If the first team cuts off the reader mid-question and gave an incorrect answer, the other team(s) still hear(s) the whole question on the bounceback.
- o. A team can choose to kill the category at any point (at which point, the reader stops reading, even if the 60 seconds have not elapsed), but even if they kill the category prior to the reader starting to read the first question, the other team still is entitled to hear the first question on the bounceback.
- p. If a team sweeps the category, they receive a 20 point bonus. This can also happen on the bounceback, if the first team misses all 8 or 6 questions, and the second team answers all 8 or 6 correctly.
- q. Once the first team is finished with their category, and all bouncebacks have been read, then the second team selects their category. Once they finish, including bouncebacks, then the third team gets the remaining category, and then bouncebacks are read from the ones they missed to finish the quarter.
- r. If the reader inadvertently blurts out the answer, or otherwise botches the question, then a replacement question (identical in number to the botched question in the order the questions are read, as they ascend in difficulty from 1-8 or 1-6) from the third unchosen category is read after both teams have selected and been read their categories and the teams have heard the corresponding bouncebacks. In three-way play, the backup bonus question is used for the replacement question, as no category goes unplayed.

D. Fourth Quarter

- a. **The fourth quarter consists of 8 longer tossup questions worth thirty, twenty, or ten points each for a correct answer depending at what point in the question the question is answered.**
- b. On the question sheets, **bold and underlined indicates a point in the question where it is worth thirty points.** **Bold only indicates where it is worth twenty points.** Regular text indicates where it is worth ten points.

E. Tiebreakers

- a. At the end of the game, if it is tied for either first or second place, a tiebreak buzzer question is used to break the tie, though it only determines who wins the match or takes second place, the tiebreaker itself has no point value (e.g., officially a game could still end 200-200, with one team receiving a win).

- b. If no team correctly answers the tiebreak, additional tossup questions are used. Tiebreakers are used as needed until one team gets one right.

2. Rules Regarding Blurts (Players Speaking Out of Turn)

- A. If a student starts giving an answer who has not buzzed (i.e. a blurt), that team is disqualified from the question.
- B. If the blurt comes from the team that had buzzed, that team is ineligible and the other team(s) gets a chance to ring in regardless of what the first person who talked said. Ideally, moderators should catch this before saying correct or incorrect and just say "I'm sorry you spoke out of turn, I'll continue for the other team(s)" but if a moderator does say "correct" inadvertently, then a backup tossup question is read alone to the other team(s). If the moderator says "incorrect" inadvertently, they finish the same question for the other team(s) and do not go to the backup.
- C. If the blurt comes from a team that had not buzzed, then the blurting team is ineligible for the question. Ideally, moderators should catch this before saying correct or incorrect and just say "I'm sorry you spoke out of turn, I'll take the response from the player who buzzed on the other team." If a moderator does say "correct" inadvertently, then a backup tossup question is read alone to the team who had buzzed. The third team, if there is one, can then only buzz once the question has been read to completion (i.e. the team that had originally buzzed gets to hear the full question and can buzz during it at any point while the 3rd team can only buzz once the full-length of the question has been read.) If the moderator says "incorrect" inadvertently, they then still take the answer from the player who had originally buzzed. If the player is incorrect, then if the third team is still eligible to buzz, they can then buzz thereafter.

3. Rules Regarding Protests and Errors

- A. **If players wish to protest, they must bring it to the moderator's attention before the first question of the next quarter is read, or before they leave the room at the end of the fourth quarter.**
- B. Protests can only be made by players, not by parents or anyone else inside or outside the match room.
- C. If the moderator botches a question by inadvertently revealing the answer or otherwise misspeaking, there are makeup questions with each round that can be used.
- D. Timing decisions and reader pronunciations are unprotestable, unless the reader clearly conveyed a potential alternate meaning to the question.
- E. Team members may protest either an answer they think they should have been given credit for, or instances where another team was given credit and they believe that should not have been the case.
- F. Team members may protest that a question was read incorrectly (for example, that the reader forgot to read a word that mattered, or said something that was factually incorrect), but this is rare.
- G. If a team protests that they should have been prompted on a question, then if their protest is upheld, the original question is thrown out, and a replacement is read with the conditions in place at the time of the buzz.
- H. If a team protests that the moderator misheard them or mis-recognized the wrong player on the team, then it is at the moderator's discretion if the protest is granted. In cases where the moderator knows that it is possible they misheard or mis-recognized the team member speaking for the team but isn't certain, then the question is thrown out and a replacement is read.
- I. If make up questions need to be read, the general principle is to adhere to the conditions in place when the original question was being read. For example, if one team buzzes and is incorrect, and then the moderator inadvertently reveals the answer while reading to the two remaining teams, on the replacement question, only the two teams who were playing when the mistake was made may hear the replacement question. For another example, if the reader made a mistake in the 20-point portion of a 4th quarter game, the replacement question begins in the 20-point portion of the question. IAC / Olympiad staff have complete discretion over setting the conditions in place on replacement questions.
- J. Protests are administered by the reader typing in the protest (or if this is not possible, via messenger) to the protest committee. The protest committee will hear and rule on all protests.
- K. A preliminary game (Rounds 1-6) will not pause for a protest to be resolved unless the outcome of the protest

would determine who might select in which order in the 3rd quarter. Protests will be resolved before teams leave the room except in very rare circumstances where more research may be needed.

- L. In playoff rounds, protests will be ruled on immediately (i.e. after the question is finished, not during questions).

4. Other Important Rules

- A. For all questions throughout the match, regardless of what style, once a player begins to speak, players can correct themselves (e.g. “Lincoln, I mean Washington”) until the moderator indicates they are correct or not, though once the moderator has started ruling (and they should rule quickly), the answer will be taken as the moderator thought the player answered; players cannot protest this.
- B. On any question, players may give extra information if it doesn’t make the answer wrong (e.g. saying “Vienna, Austria” even if “Vienna” would suffice or “Hamlet by Shakespeare”) but they cannot “go fishing” (e.g. “Hapsburg Empire, Maria Theresa, Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna!”). If they provide extra information that is incorrect (e.g. “George Shakespeare” or “Vienna, Slovakia”) then the answer is deemed incorrect.
- C. During any tossup question, students may not confer verbally or in writing with their teammates. However, they may raise their hand, extend their buzzer, or gesture in a clear and single way that indicates they know the answer, but not convey what the answer itself is or any further clue to it, nor can they write notes while a tossup is being read.
- D. No pre-existing resources are permitted during matches, though it is permitted to use a writing utensil and a blank piece of paper at the start of the match to take notes.
- E. On all tossup questions where one or two teams have rung in and answered incorrectly, the remaining team or teams that are still eligible to answer the question must still ring in; they cannot just say the answer (even in the rare case where the team is a solo student playing on their own). If they do so, without having rung in on the buzzer, it is considered as an incorrect response for that team (even if the correct answer is in fact given).

5. Rules Regarding Cheating and Conduct

- A. **Cheating is absolutely prohibited and teams that cheat are subject to immediate disqualification from the tournament, and potentially the Olympiad in its entirety.** This includes illegal conferring among teammates that is not inadvertent, accessing outside resources, and other obvious situations where a clear and unfair advantage is being obtained.

6. Supremacy Clauses and Addenda

- A. **Note that if there is a discrepancy between the Official Rules file and what is on this summary, then it is this summary that in fact takes precedence.**
- B. The file labeled “Official Conventions, Precedents, and Standards for Answer Acceptance,” (accessible through the Resources section of the IAC USA Division Website on the “Rules, Scoresheets, and Question Distribution” page) is also considered to be an official part of the Official Rules for the purposes of the tournament.
- C. As always, International Academic Competitions / International History Olympiad staff reserve the right at all times to make non-protestable executive decisions in the best interest of the tournament to handle situations that are not explicitly discussed in this summary or the Official Rules.
- D. Questions on the rules, or on any aspect of the International History Bowl World Championships tournament should be directed to olympiad@iacompetitions.com.